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PROGRESS IN SOIL CONSERVATION - NORTH CENTRAL REGION

A radio talk by G. B. Thorne, director North Central Division, AAA, broadcast Monday, June 15, 1936, in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour, by WMAL and 49 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company.

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Thank you, Morse, and good afternoon to you in the Farm and Home audience.

It has been just 10 weeks today since I last talked with you. The 1936 farm program for the North Central Region had just been announced, and I tried to clear up some of the provisions of the program as to soil-depleting bases and soil-conserving practices and payments. Much progress has been made toward soil conservation and improvement since that time.

Last week we asked the chairman of the State Committee in each State to send us an unofficial report on the number of work sheets that have been filled out and other facts pertaining to progress of the program.

As you know, the work sheet is a very important document in the 1936 program. It shows how land on the farm was used last year. The county and community committeemen must have this information before they can recommend a soil-depleting base for the farm. Every farmer must see to it that a work sheet is filled out for each farm he owns or operates in the county if he intends to apply for either Class I or Class II payments. Class I payments are the soil-conserving payments. They are being made for the diversion of some of the acreage in the soil-depleting base to the production of soil-conserving crops. The Class II are the soil-building payments. They are being offered for new seedings of legumes and perennial grasses and for such approved practices that will conserve the soil or build up its fertility.

To get back to progress made in the States, the reports show that North Central Region farmers have had 1,884,000 work sheets filled out. Three hundred thousand more work sheets are expected soon, making a total of 2,100,000.

These reports indicate excellent progress. I want to emphasize, however, that they do not necessarily mean that some two million farmers in these 10 Corn Belt states will take part in the program and receive payments. Even though a work sheet is necessary before a grant can be obtained, the work sheet does not obligate the farmer in any way to perform in line with the soil conservation standards established for 1936.

These reports also do not mean that work sheets have been filled out for nearly two million farms. In some cases a farmer must fill out two or more work sheets in order to provide the necessary information on one farming unit. For example, if he operates his own farm and then rents a part of his neighbor's farm, on a share basis, he makes out one work sheet for his own farm and makes out another one for the tract of land he rents from his neighbor.

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So, you see, we can not make any accurate estimates now on how many farmers are going to take part nor how much performance will be made. But we believe that in most of the 898 counties in this Region, practically all farms will be covered by work sheets. This makes it possible for all farmers in those counties to apply for grants later in the year if they desire to do so.

Many farmers, of course, already have adopted some practices which will qualify them for payments. These practices include diversion made from corn and other soil-depleting crops to soil-conserving crops or uses, the plowing under of green manure crops, and so forth. Other farmers are following approved practices for pasture improvement or weed control. Still others will take advantage of additional opportunities available for performance. During June farmers may put in new seedings of permanent pasture grasses adaptable to their locality, or plant new seedings of soil-conserving legumes, or soybeans or cowpeas to be plowed under as green manure crops. They also may qualify for a payment by improving their pastures or crop land by applying lime or other mineral supplements that the soil may need.

All farmers who are cooperating in the program should assemble such evidence as may be necessary to prove that they have performed in line with the program standards. This evidence may consist of what we call statements of proof. These statements should be obtained, for example, when lime is applied on pastureland, or when phosphates are added to the soil before legumes are seeded.

Obtaining this evidence is important. The only proof of performance with respect to legume and grass seedings which has been approved thus far is a good stand at the time performance is checked. If dry weather causes a weak stand, a condition over which the producer has no control, the Secretary of Agriculture may accept some other proof, such as the kind and amount of seed sown and the way in which the seedbed was prepared.

The responsibility for establishing proof of performance in these cases rests upon the producer himself, that is, upon the farm owner or operator who intends to apply for a soil conservation grant. He may obtain the necessary evidence by having a statement of proof certified by at least two of his neighboring farmers or by one of his local committeemen.

The statement of proof should contain the following information: The name of the county and township; receipts for the purchase of any seed or other materials; proof of the kind and amount of seed sown or material applied; the date when the seeding was made, or when the approved practice was adopted; the number of acres upon which the practice was followed, and the identification of such land; and such other material as may support the evidence.

If these statements of proof are obtained and kept on file until later in the year when performance is checked on the farm, many difficulties may be avoided. If more detailed information is wanted on how to assemble adequate evidence of performance, producers should consult their county agent or their local committeemen.

In closing, may I suggest that farmers who intend to participate in the program and who have not had a work sheet filled out for their farm, do so immediately. The job of filling out work sheets has been completed in many counties. It will be necessary to wind up this work in all counties in a very few days.
